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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION
Office of Marketing Services
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NUTRITION PROGRAMS BRANCH

1. Basic responsibility of the Nutrition Programs Branch

The Nutrition Programs Branch is responsible for developing a coordinated national wartime nutrition program. Its efforts are directed toward insuring the highest possible level of nutrition as a factor in maintaining the health of the American people under war conditions.

The Branch's work is largely educational in character. Its activities are concerned primarily with getting information to housewives on how they can best cooperate with the War Food Administration in making the most of the war food supply. It directs its attention to such fundamentally important matters as: How can the housewife do the best job of feeding her family properly on the foods available? How can she adapt available foods to fit the food habits of her family, for example, using meat extenders to stretch the meat supply? What is the best way to include in meals food that is in temporary surplus? How can foods in short supply be compensated for by other foods of equal value? How can foods of exceptionally high nutritional value such as soybeans, peanut butter, and enriched flour and bread be utilized to strengthen the nutritional value of wartime meals?

Through its coordinated structure of existing agencies, the Branch carries out essentially the same functions for which a large educational agency staff was required during World War I. This structure is outlined in the following sections.

2. Historical background

The work of the Branch is a continuation of the work of the Nutrition Division of the Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services created under Executive Order 8890 of September 3, 1941. Under this order, the Nutrition Division was charged with the responsibility for studying, planning, and encouraging measures to assure adequate nutrition services to citizens of the Nation. It served as a center for the coordination of nutrition services carried on by departments and offices of the Federal Government and other agencies, public and private. It also made available the services of specialists in nutrition to States and localities to assist in planning and executing their programs.

The Nutrition Division was transferred to the Department of Agriculture by Executive Order 9310 of March 6, 1943, in order to achieve a more direct association of its activities with the developing programs of the War Food Administration. As the Nutrition Programs Branch, it continues its functions under the administrative direction of the Office of Marketing Services in the War Food Administration.

The initial stimulus for the coordination of nutrition activities was provided by the National Nutrition Conference called by the President in May 1941. It established the point at which Federal and State functions as well as the interests of food industries, national organizations, labor and other groups were brought into a related program, national in scope. State nutrition committees, created in each of the 48 States, followed a recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Land-Grant Colleges in 1940, and aligned themselves with the program. Food industries contributed their advertising resources, and national organizations cooperated through their State and local memberships. It thus became an intensive educational program designed to teach the American public the elementary principles of nutrition and to bring about an improvement in the nutritional values of the daily meals of the individual. The same basic purpose exists in the current program with the emphasis now placed more directly on ways and means of securing the highest nutritional return from foods available under existing conditions of wartime food supply.

3. Current function and program.

The primary function of the Branch continues to be coordination - furnishing leadership for the national nutrition program. Its program is one of suggesting and supporting activities, particularly on the local community level, which will assist the American public to understand and apply sound nutritional principles in the use of the wartime food supply. This program furnishes the essential "face-to-face" educational medium which picks up where other media, such as press, radio, and films, leave off. It supplies the means for the more personal follow-through necessary to stimulate the individual to put into practice the information he has gained. To accomplish these purposes, the Branch has mobilized and is coordinating the skills of practically all agencies and individuals having special knowledge of food and nutrition. Its programs are carried out through an organized channel from Federal to State to local levels as follows.

On the Federal level a number of agencies carry on nutrition activities related to their special spheres of responsibility. The major agencies among these are the United States Public Health Service, the Office of Education (Federal Security Agency), the Children's Bureau (Department of Labor), the American Red Cross; and the Extension Service, the Farm Security Administration, the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics and other units of the War Food Administration and the Department of Agriculture. Each of these agencies is represented on an Interdepartmental Nutrition Coordinating Committee, with which the Branch consults in developing its program.

At the State level, there are counterparts of the majority of the above-named Federal agencies. Representatives of these State agencies form the State nutrition committees, which have been in existence in each of the 48 States and have been carrying on active nutrition programs since 1940. All States have sponsored local nutrition committees through which the programs recommended by the Nutrition Programs Branch, as well as their own State programs, are carried out. Membership of these local committees is usually made up of the local home demonstration agent, the home economics teacher, the local health officer, the Farm Security Home Management Supervisor, representatives of other interested local agencies and groups such as the home economics demonstrators of the local utility companies, the Red Cross nutritionists, and representatives of the

Parent-Teachers Association. It is estimated that there are from 3,500 to 4,000 local committees, all of which take their general direction from the State Nutrition Committee.

The agencies and individuals brought into an organized force by the Branch programs represent the full resource of the country in technical knowledge and lay interest in nutrition and supply a facility which could not be provided by any other means. The Branch program is therefore directed toward securing the full contribution of all these cooperating groups in furthering the War Food Program. Its organization accordingly is small and is designed to function most effectively toward this end.

4. Field operations

Within the Nutrition Programs Branch, the Community Nutrition Services Division has the responsibility for field operations and for the development of State program materials. This work is divided between the National Nutrition Activities Section and the State and Local Nutrition Activities Section.

The National Nutrition Activities Section is responsible for the preparation of materials such as a monthly news letter, technical nutrition information materials, and special publications.

The State and Local Nutrition Activities Section handles program development with the State committees. Regional conferences are held periodically with the State chairmen, and a staff of field representatives (one for each of the five regional areas of the War Food Administration) maintain constant field contact with the chairmen. The field consultant personally interprets new phases of the program, assisting with the problems of the established aspects of the program, advising and consulting with the secretaries who have been assigned to the committees to work within the individual State. Each field consultant assigned to a regional area maintains cooperative relationships with a regional office of the War Food Administration. State and local nutrition committees carry the responsibility for interpreting and adjusting the national program to the local community.

There is a State nutrition committee in each State, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. To implement the nutrition program, an executive secretary is provided for each State nutrition committee to facilitate its work. The executive secretaries work under the immediate direction of State nutrition committees.

5. Special services

Programs which do not specifically relate to the work of the committees or to the coordination procedures in operation with other Federal agencies are handled by the Special Services Division. Special programs have been developed in the interest of securing the aid and cooperation of certain groups independently of committee work. The food industries, for example, have contributed greatly to the program by featuring the food chart and in directing their advertising toward better balanced diets; special programs have been undertaken with physicians and public health officers, and direct relations have been established with national organizations having State and local affiliates.

